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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PBTS](#) [UN](#) [MO](#) [AG](#)

SUBJECT: WESTERN SAHARA: ALGERIA OPTIMISTIC, POLISARIO DOUR

REF: A. STATE 44639

[1](#)B. ALGIERS 421

Classified By: DCM Thomas F. Daughton; reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) In response to ref A, MFA Director General for African Affairs Lounes Magramane told the DCM on May 3 that Algeria's response to the MINURSO rollover resolution had been "measured and positive" and that Algeria supported Ambassador Christopher Ross. The Algerian government issued a statement on May 1 supporting Ross and viewing "with great interest" the passage of UNSCR 1871 renewing the MINURSO mandate for 12 months. Both Magramane and the government statement repeated the views Magramane expressed to the Ambassador prior to the MINURSO renewal (ref B), specifically, that MINURSO should address human rights concerns in a larger, clearer way. Magramane told the DCM that Algeria understood the need to give Ross time to maneuver and said that Algeria would be ready to go to a fifth round of Manhasset talks whenever the informal preparatory talks -- in which Algeria would not participate -- made such a round possible.

DOUR, SKEPTICAL POLISARIO

[1](#)2. (C) While Polisario Ambassador to Algeria Ibrahim Ghali did tell the DCM on May 4 that the Polisario "had never missed an opportunity to negotiate," he was markedly more defiant than Magramane had been the previous day. In response to ref A demarche, Ghali called UNSCR 1871 a "bad start" for Ross because it carried over objectionable language about the Moroccan autonomy plan from the previous resolution rather than starting anew. Ghali said he was extremely disappointed that MINURSO remained an exception among UN mandates in that it failed to address the human rights concerns of the Sahrawi people. He asserted that the Polisario had held out high hopes for a new pragmatic approach from the Obama Administration, particularly given the expectations Ross' appointment had brought, but that UNSCR 1871 was "a cold shower" that caused the Polisario to lose faith in the UN. Ghali made clear that the Polisario's primary complaints were the lack of a human rights mandate and the continued presence of language such as "realism" and "serious and credible" used to describe an eventual solution -- language he said showed that nothing had changed. Ghali dismissed the U.S. explanation of vote on UNSCR 1871, saying it did not change the passage of an unsavory resolution.

[1](#)3. (C) In response to Ghali's skepticism, DCM underscored the need to give Ross time, and noted that this would not be a good moment to demonstrate a reluctance to support the negotiation process. Ghali said he understood the message, but said that the Polisario "had been hearing that same message since 1991." Ghali said that he hoped Ross would be able to remain neutral and balanced, and noted that the

Polisario faced internal frustrations with the lack of progress, particularly among its youth. He warned of the need to show results, to avoid the risk of radicalizing frustrated elements within the Polisario and creating some sort of " Hamas in the Maghreb," which would not serve anyone's interests in the fragile region.

COMMENT

¶4. (C) When pressed, Ghali retreated from his bluster and expressed support for Ross and pride that the Polisario had "never missed an opportunity to negotiate." We believe that both Algeria and the Polisario are privately pleased with the apparent shift towards neutrality that Ross has brought to his role as UN mandate. However, pressures from within the Polisario ranks and among the Algerian public have caused both to press on those issues they still seek to change, as if to remind everyone that being pleased at limited progress should not be interpreted as complacency or contentment. When presented with Amb. Ross' informal talks, we expect that the Polisario will participate, but cloak its participation in defiant rhetoric, both to placate a frustrated Sahrawi population and to afford the Polisario negotiators the strongest possible starting position.

PEARCE